

CALCIUM-RICH GAP TRANSIENTS IN THE REMOTE OUTSKIRTS OF GALAXIES

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ABSTRACT

From the first two seasons of the Palomar Transient Factory, we identify three peculiar transients (PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv, PTF 11bij) with five distinguishing characteristics: peak luminosity in the gap between novae and supernovae ($M_R \approx -15.5$ to -16.5 mag), rapid photometric evolution ($t_{\text{rise}} \approx 12$ –15 days), large photospheric velocities (≈ 6000 to 11000 km s⁻¹), early spectroscopic evolution into nebular phase (≈ 1 to 3 months) and peculiar nebular spectra dominated by Calcium. We also culled the extensive decade-long Lick Observatory Supernova Search database and identified an additional member of this group, SN 2007ke. Our choice of photometric and spectroscopic properties was motivated by SN 2005E (Perets et al. 2010). To our surprise, as in the case of SN 2005E, all four members of this group are also clearly offset from the bulk of their host galaxy. Given the well-sampled early and late-time light curves, we derive ejecta masses in the range of 0.4 – $0.7 M_{\odot}$. Spectroscopically, we find that there may be a diversity in the photospheric phase, but the commonality is in the unusual nebular spectra. Our extensive follow-up observations rule out standard thermonuclear and standard core-collapse explosions for this class of “Calcium-rich gap” transients. If the progenitor is a white dwarf, we are likely seeing a detonation of the white dwarf core and perhaps even shock-front interaction with a previously ejected nova shell. In the less likely scenario of a massive star progenitor, a nonstandard channel specific to a low-metallicity environment needs to be invoked (e.g., ejecta fallback leading to black hole formation). Detection (or the lack thereof) of a faint underlying host (dwarf galaxy, cluster) will provide a crucial and decisive diagnostic to choose between these alternatives.

Subject headings: surveys – supernovae – novae – white dwarfs – galaxies: halos – galaxies: clusters

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, supernova (SN) surveys targeting nearby, luminous galaxies have been immensely successful since the total local starlight searched is signifi-

cantly larger than in untargated pointings of equal area. The Palomar Transient Factory (PTF; Law et al. 2009; Rau et al. 2009)¹⁶ is a wide-angle transient survey that has an ongoing Dynamic Cadence experiment that combines the advantages of both a targeted and an untargated survey. This experiment searches wide-angle pointings of local ($d < 200$ Mpc) galaxy light concentrations at a 1-day cadence to a median depth of 21 mag. The depth, cadence, and choice of pointings allow us to find transients that are fainter, faster, and rarer than supernovae. Furthermore, these survey design characteristics facilitate the discovery of intracluster transients as well as transients in the far-flung outskirts of their host galaxies.

While monitoring supernovae from the targeted Lick Observatory Supernova Search (LOSS; Li et al. 2000; Filippenko et al. 2001) with the Katzman Automatic Imaging Telescope (KAIT), Filippenko et al. (2003) noted that there was a subclass of peculiar Type I supernovae that appeared to be rich in Calcium at an early stage. Perets et al. (2010) presented extensive observations of one of these events, SN 2005E. In addition to the Calcium-richness, SN 2005E was subluminal and rapidly evolving. Furthermore, SN 2005E was located 23 kpc away from the nucleus of its host galaxy, with no signs of underlying star formation to deep limits. The physical origin of SN 2005E remains a matter of debate.

Motivated thus, and given that the survey design of

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PTF allows it be to especially sensitive to find and follow-up such events, we searched the PTF discovery stream. We find three transients – PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv and PTF 11bij – that share five distinguishing characteristics with SN 2005E: (i) peak luminosity intermediate between that of novae and supernovae, (ii) faster photometric evolution (rise and decline) than supernovae, (iii) photospheric velocities comparable to supernovae, (iv) early evolution to the nebular phase, and (v) nebular spectra dominated by Calcium emission. These five explosion properties define a distinct class of “Calcium-rich gap” transients. (We closely scrutinize the choice of this set of explosion characteristics in §7.1.)

Remarkably, these three PTF transients were also found in remote locations, more than 30 kpc away from the nuclei of their host galaxies. Location was not used as a selection criterion; yet, we do not see any other PTF supernovae thus far that display the five explosion characteristics listed above (see §7.2 for details). Therefore, in §2 we take a closer look at the locations of these three transients in the context of locations of other PTF supernovae.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. We present observations of PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv and PTF 11bij in §3, §4 and §5 respectively. We show the available data on the six archival candidates from the past decade in §6. We analyze the properties of the combined sample of well-observed transients in this class in §7. We discuss whether this class has an underlying physical commonality and speculate on its origin in §8, and conclude in §9.

2. OFFSET DISTRIBUTION OF PTF SUPERNOVAE

The location of a transient explosion has long been exploited as a clue to determining its nature. It has been suggested that the classical nova population is bimodal, with some dependence on whether the nova is located in the Galactic disk or bulge (Shafter et al. 2011). Several studies of supernova host-galaxy properties as well as the site of the supernova within the host galaxy have been undertaken (Howell 2001; van den Bergh 1997; Prieto et al. 2008; Hakobyan et al. 2009; Boissier & Prantzos 2009; Anderson & James 2009). Subluminous Type Ia supernovae (SN Ia) are found preferentially in old environments (Howell 2001) (for a review of spectroscopic classification of supernovae, see Filippenko 1997). Core-collapse supernovae (SN CC) and more luminous SN Ia are preferentially found in late-type galaxies (Hamuy et al. 1996). Type Ic supernovae are not found in dwarfs (Arcavi et al. 2010) and SN Ibc are more centrally concentrated than SN II (Anderson & James 2009). About 15% of the stellar mass is expected to be in the intergalactic medium in clusters, and a handful of intracluster supernovae have been discovered (Gal-Yam et al. 2003; Sand et al. 2011). At higher energies, gamma-ray burst offsets from host galaxies offered a clue to their progenitors (Fruchter et al. 2006; Bloom et al. 2006).

In the first two years, PTF discovered and spectroscopically confirmed over 1300 extragalactic transients. Here, we limit the study of the offset distribution of PTF supernovae to the first 520 transients which were nearby,

with redshift $z < 0.1$. We compute precise projected offsets from the host galaxies for each transient, and the resulting histogram is shown in Figure 1. The redshift of the host galaxy is consistent with the redshift of the transient. Note that the offset is projected and hence, only a lower limit.

We split the population into core-collapse supernovae and thermonuclear supernovae. We find that the core-collapse and thermonuclear populations show similar distributions out to a projected offset from the host nucleus of ≈ 9 kpc suggesting that the average distribution is proportional to starlight. Beyond 9 kpc, the thermonuclear population shows a heavily extended tail suggesting a second parameter governing their rate or perhaps even two progenitor populations (Mannucci et al. 2006). A cautionary note here is that although this sample is relatively more homogeneous in that it is drawn from a single survey with extensive follow-up observations, it is not spared the vagaries of incompleteness due to weather and follow-up bias.

Next, we take a closer look at the population with offsets larger than 20 kpc. We co-add available pre-explosion data to derive limiting magnitudes on a satellite host galaxy at the location of the supernova (see Figure 1, right panel). The redshift limit constrains the luminosity of underlying host galaxies based on our pre-explosion co-adds to at least -16 mag.

Focusing on the dozen transients with offsets larger than 30 kpc, we find 9 SN Ia, 0 SN CC, and 3 peculiar transients. Five SN Ia – PTF 09cex, PTF 10fjg, PTF 10xua, PTF 10xgb, and PTF 10xgc – with offsets of 30–36 kpc have spectroscopically confirmed host redshifts. Three SN Ia – PTF 10qnk (101 kpc), PTF 10qht (79 kpc), and PTF 10qyx (48 kpc) – are possibly intra-cluster supernovae (Horeish et al., in prep.). The furthest offset SN Ia, PTF 10ops (140 kpc), has peculiar properties and is the subject of another paper (Maguire et al. 2011).

The three peculiar transients are the topic of this paper. PTF 09dav is offset from a spiral host by 40 kpc; PTF 10iuv is in a galaxy cluster containing early and late-type galaxies, with the closest being an elliptical galaxy 37 kpc away; and PTF 11bij is in a cluster of early-type galaxies, with the closest being 33 kpc away. Note that in units of host-galaxy Petrosian radii, these offsets correspond to 4.9, 5.9, and 3.8 radii, respectively. We cannot rule out the possibility of an underlying low-luminosity dwarf host; we can only constrain dwarfs to a limiting R -band absolute magnitude of -9.8 , -12.1 , and -12.4 for PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv, and PTF 11bij, respectively. Finding dwarf satellites at a separation of 40 kpc would not be unusual (cf., Andromeda’s -8.5 mag satellite at 350 kpc; Slater et al. 2011).

3. OBSERVATIONS: PTF 09DAV

We presented the discovery, light curve, and photospheric spectra of PTF 09dav in a previous paper (Sullivan et al. 2011). We found that PTF 09dav had a low peak absolute magnitude of $M_R \approx -16.3$ and a short rise-time of 12 days relative to SN Ia (which peak at -19 mag with a rise-time of 17.5 days). We also found that the photospheric spectra resembled those of SN 1991bg-like (Filippenko et al. 1992) subluminous SN Ia but with very unusual strong lines of Sc II, Mg I and possibly Sr II. Photospheric velocities were ≈ 6000

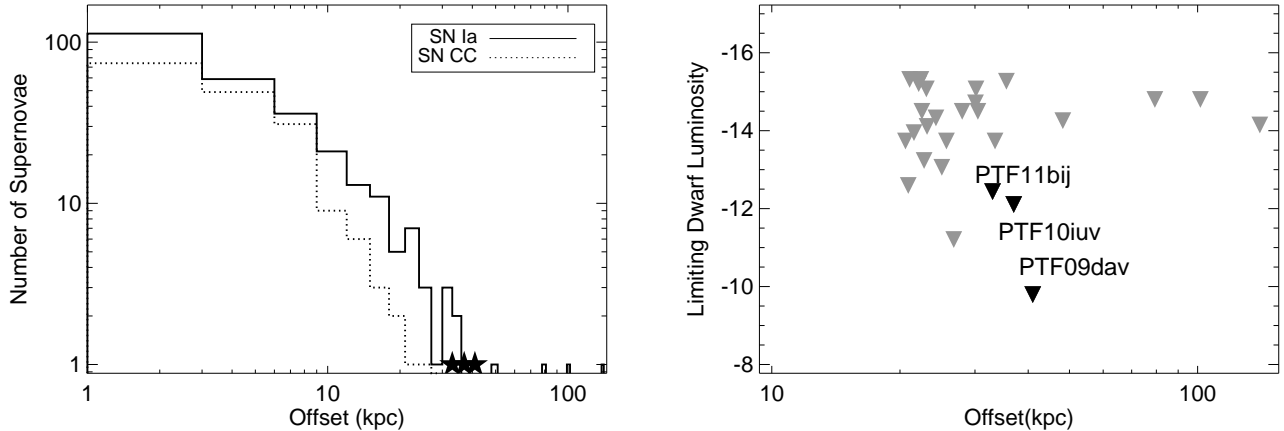


FIG. 1.— *Left*: Histogram of projected offsets from the host-galaxy nucleus for the first 520 transients discovered and spectroscopically classified by the Palomar Transient Factory with $z < 0.1$. Stars denote the locations of PTF 11bij, PTF 10iuv and PTF 09dav. *Right*: Upper limits for an underlying dwarf host (M_R) for transients with offset greater than 20 kpc.

kms^{-1} . Here, we present late-time imaging and nebular spectroscopy of PTF09dav.

3.1. Late-Time Imaging

We undertook deep imaging in the g -band and R -band filters at the position of PTF 09dav with the Low Resolution Imaging Spectrometer (LRIS; Oke et al. 1995) on the Keck I telescope on 2010 May 15.603 and July 9.584 (UT dates are used throughout this paper), 9–11 months after explosion. We registered these images with a Palomar 60-inch (P60) image of PTF09dav. No source is detected to a 3σ limiting magnitude of $R = 26.2$ mag (Table 1, Figure 3). This constrains any satellite, dwarf host to be fainter than $M_R = -9.8$ mag.

We undertook imaging in the K' band with Laser Guide Star Adaptive Optics (LGS-AO; Wizinowich et al. 2006; van Dam et al. 2006) on the Keck II telescope with the Near Infrared Camera 2 (NIRC2). On 2010 June 17.568, we obtained 10 images of 10s co-added integrations. The zeropoint was derived relative to the 2MASS catalog (Skrutskie et al. 2006). No source was detected to a 3σ limit of $K' = 21.1$ mag.

3.2. Nebular Spectroscopy

On 2009 November 11, only three months after maximum light, a spectrum taken with LRIS on Keck I revealed that PTF 09dav had become nebular. The time scale to become nebular was surprising as it was faster than that of typical supernovae by a factor of a few. Furthermore, only two emission features are seen – $\text{H}\alpha$ and $[\text{Ca II}] \lambda\lambda 7291, 7324$. The width, redshift, and flux of the lines are summarized in Table 2. The absence of the Ca II near-infrared (IR) triplet ($\lambda\lambda 8498, 8542, 8662$) is indicative of a low circumstellar density. No $\text{H}\alpha$ was seen in the photospheric spectra presented by Sullivan et al. (2011). The presence of $\text{H}\alpha$ emission is usually interpreted as the interaction of a massive star wind with the circumstellar environment. Neither oxygen (prominent in SN CC) nor iron lines (prominent in SN Ia) are seen in the nebular phase. These characteristics of the nebular spectrum were unprecedented and no match could be found in supernova libraries.

4. OBSERVATIONS: PTF 10IUV

4.1. Discovery and Light Curve

On 2010 May 31.241, PTF discovered a new transient, PTF 10iuv, at $\alpha(\text{J2000}) = 17^{\text{h}}16^{\text{m}}54.27^{\text{s}}$ and $\delta(\text{J2000}) = +31^{\circ}33'51.7''$. It was initially found at $R = 21.2$ mag, and we monitored its brightness with the P60 in the $Bgriz$ filters for three months (Cenko et al. 2006). Late-time photometric observations were taken with the Large Format Camera (LFC) on the Palomar 200-inch telescope and LRIS on the Keck I telescope.

Data were reduced following standard procedures and aperture photometry was performed. Photometric calibration was done relative to photometry of field stars from the Sloan Digital Sky Survey (Abazajian et al. 2009). A common set of calibration stars was chosen for the P48, P60, LFC and LRIS data for consistency. Conversion from $ugriz$ to the B band was done following Jordi et al. (2006).

The light curve is summarized in Figure 5. PTF 10iuv peaked on June 10 with $R = 19.0$ mag. It rapidly rose by 3 mag in 12 days, followed by a rapid decline at the rate of 1 mag in 12 days for one month. Subsequently, PTF 10iuv evolved slowly at the rate of $0.02 \text{ mag day}^{-1}$ for three months followed by $0.005 \text{ mag day}^{-1}$. The color was neither extremely red nor blue. It evolved from $g - i \approx 0.4$ near maximum to $g - i \approx 0.7$ one month later.

4.2. Spectroscopy

On June 7, we obtained a classification spectrum using ISIS on the William Herschel Telescope (WHT). Subsequently, we continued to monitor the evolution with the Keck I (+LRIS) and Keck II (+DEIMOS) telescopes until the spectra became completely nebular (Figure 6).

The spectra evolved to show prominent Helium features, resembling Type Ib spectra. The Calcium lines become stronger with time, especially $[\text{Ca II}]$ relative to O I. We identify major lines both pre-maximum and post-maximum using SYNOW (Figure 7).

As with PTF09dav, the spectrum of PTF 10iuv became nebular in only 3 months. Both showed prominent Calcium emission (Table 2, Figure 4). Unlike PTF 09dav, PTF10iuv showed O I emission and did not exhibit $\text{H}\alpha$

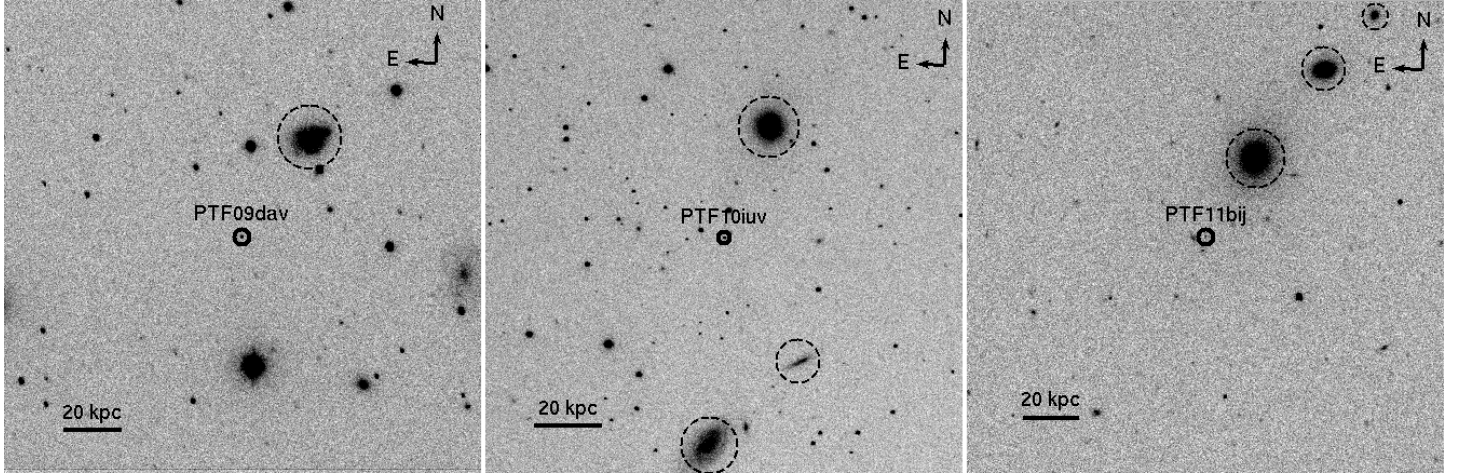


FIG. 2.— *Left:* PTF 09dav is offset from its late-type host (circled) by 40 kpc. Note that the galaxy on the western edge is unrelated as it is at a different redshift. *Center:* PTF 10iuv is offset from a galaxy group (circled) with early-type and late-type galaxies; the nearest potential host is 37 kpc away. *Right:* PTF 11bij is offset from a group of early-type galaxies (circled); the nearest is 33 kpc away.

TABLE 1
LATE-TIME PHOTOMETRY OF PTF 09DAV

Date (UT 2010)	Phase (day)	Facility	Exposure (s)	Filter	Magnitude
May 15.612	279.7	Keck I/LRIS	1230	<i>g</i>	>26.0
May 15.614	279.7	Keck I/LRIS	1030	<i>R</i>	>24.8
June 17.568	313.7	Keck II/NIRC2	100	<i>K'</i>	>21.1
July 9.584	334.7	Keck I/LRIS	1450	<i>g</i>	>25.4
July 9.584	334.7	Keck I/LRIS	1200	<i>R</i>	>26.2

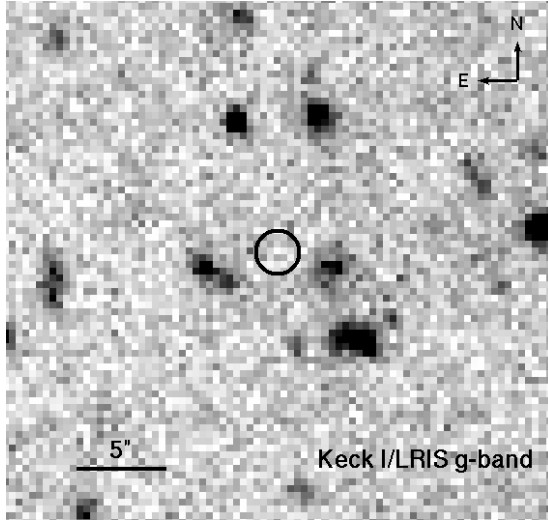


FIG. 3.— Deep late-time *g*-band imaging with Keck I/LRIS showing no host galaxy at the position of PTF 09dav brighter than 26 mag. The registration accuracy is $0.241''$. We denote the position of PTF 09dav with a 5σ position error circle.

emission in the nebular phase.

4.3. Radio Observations

We observed PTF 10iuv with the Expanded Very Large Array twice, once on 2010 August 25.06 and again on

2011 May 12.20. We observed in the X-band (8.46 GHz) and added together two adjacent 128 MHz subbands with full polarization to maximize continuum sensitivity. Amplitude and bandpass calibration was achieved using the archival flux value of J1721+3542. Phase calibration was carried out every 10 min by switching between the target field and the point source J1721+3542. The visibility data were calibrated and imaged in the *AIPS* package following standard practice.

The transient was not detected with a 3σ upper limit of $189 \mu\text{Jy}$ during the first epoch and $96 \mu\text{Jy}$ during the second epoch. This corresponds to $L_\nu < 1.0 \times 10^{27} \text{ erg s}^{-1} \text{ Hz}^{-1}$.

5. OBSERVATIONS: PTF 11BIJ

On 2011 March 13.187, PTF discovered a new transient, PTF 11bij, at $\alpha(\text{J2000}) = 12^{\text{h}}58^{\text{m}}58.39^{\text{s}}$ and $\delta(\text{J2000}) = +37^\circ23'12.0''$. It was initially found at $R = 19.9\text{mag}$, and we monitored its brightness with the P60 in the *gri* filters. Similar to PTF 09dav and PTF 10iuv, the light curve showed a peak luminosity in the gap between novae and supernovae, and it evolved rapidly (see Figure 8).

We obtained a Target Of Opportunity spectrum on 2011 April 3.40 and a nebular spectrum on April 27.40, both with LRIS on the Keck I telescope (Figure 4). The spectra were Calcium-rich, similar to PTF 10iuv and PTF 09dav, and the redshift of 0.035 is consistent with a group of early-type galaxies (the nearest galaxy is offset

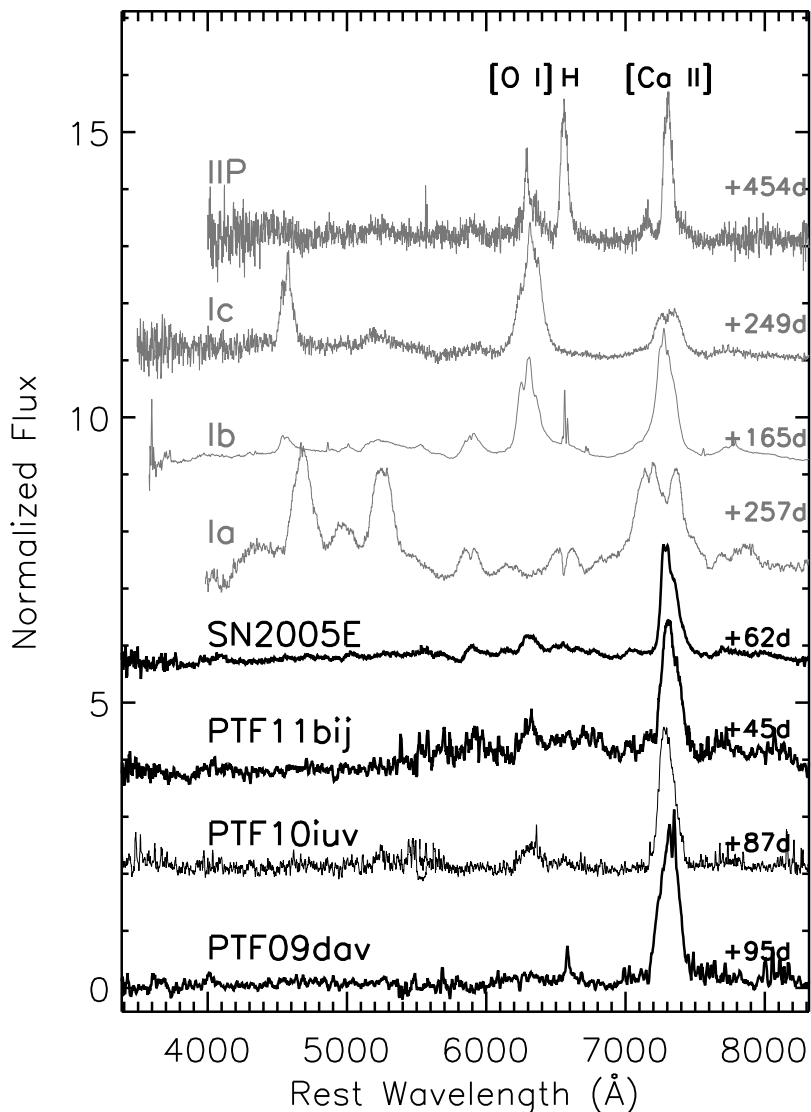


FIG. 4.— Nebular spectra of PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv, and SN 2005E. All three are very Calcium-rich. Also shown for comparison, nebular spectra of a SN Ia (SN 1986G, +257 day; Asiago Catalog), a SN Ib (SN 2007C, +165 day; Taubenberger et al. 2009), a SN Ic (SN 2002ap, +249 day; Gal-Yam et al. 2002) and a SNIIP (SN 2004et, +454 day; Sahu et al. 2006). The nebular spectra of SN Ia are dominated by [Fe II], [Fe III], and [Co III] emission lines. The nebular spectra of SNCC have a much lower ratio of Calcium to Oxygen.

by 33 kpc).

6. OBSERVATIONS: ARCHIVAL CANDIDATES

Here, we present archival data on candidate transients from other surveys noted for their Calcium-rich spectra (Filippenko et al. 2003). Specifically, Perets et al. (2010) suggest that the following six supernovae resemble SN 2005E: SN 2000ds (IAUC#7507), SN 2001co (IAUC#7643), SN 2003dg (IAUC#8113), SN 2003dr (IAUC#8117), SN 2003H (IAUC#8045), and SN 2007ke (CBET#1084). SN 2000ds was discovered by T. Puckett. SN 2001co, SN 2003dg, SN 2003H, and SN 2007ke were discovered by LOSS. SN 2003dr was discovered independently by both T. Puckett and LOSS.

Here, we review the available data for these super-

novae. In Figure 9, we display the environments of these candidate members of the Calcium-rich class. Next, in Figure 10, we plot their spectra (at the latest phase available) and compare them to those of PTF 10iuv. The strength of [Ca II] relative to Oxygen is a distinguishing spectroscopic feature of this class; it is common to SN 2000ds, SN 2003dg, SN 2003dr, SN 2007ke, and SN 2003H. The case for SN 2001co is less clear due to the noisy spectrum and we exclude it from further analysis.

Unfortunately, the photometry is extremely sparse for this sample — only one of the five supernovae has more than two points on the light curve. SN 2007ke has a peak absolute magnitude of -16.3 , a rise-time of 15 days, and a decline rate of 0.1 mag day^{-1} (Figure 8). There-

TABLE 2
LINES IN NEBULAR SPECTRA

Transient	Ion	Line Center Å	Shift ^a km s ⁻¹	Flux erg cm ⁻² s ⁻¹	Width ^b Å	Velocity Width km s ⁻¹
SN 2005E	O I	6360.6	-1120	2.0×10^{-15}	107.8	5110
SN 2005E	[Ca II]	7367.0	-17	1.5×10^{-14}	127.6	5240
SN 2005E	Ca II	8710.4	2530	2.7×10^{-14}	299.0	10470
PTF 09dav	H α	6820.4	840	7.6×10^{-17}	23.5	1000
PTF 09dav	[Ca II]	7579.1	250	2.0×10^{-15}	166.1	6600
PTF 10iuv	O I	6467.7	-460	1.7×10^{-16}	170.8	8090
PTF 10iuv	[Ca II]	7465.4	-410	8.0×10^{-16}	134.2	5510
PTF 10iuv	Ca II	8827.3	2150	9.4×10^{-16}	312.8	10950
PTF 11bij	O I	6531.5	-1010	8.6×10^{-17}	98.8	4680
PTF 11bij	[Ca II]	7573.5	406	5.8×10^{-16}	136.9	5620
PTF 11bij	Ca II	8960.0	3140	1.3×10^{-15}	257.0	9000

NOTE. — ^a Shift is computed relative to the velocity of the putative host galaxy.

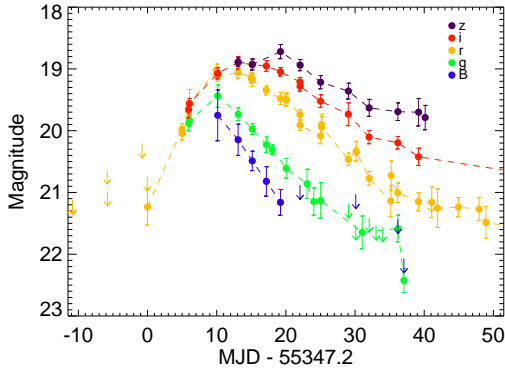


FIG. 5.— Light curves of PTF 10iuv. Note the rapid rise of 3 mag in 12 days, followed by the rapid decline at the rate of 1 mag in 12 days.

fore, SN 2007ke satisfies all of the photometric and spectroscopic properties of the class of “Calcium-rich gap” transients as outlined in §1. Note that the location of SN 2007ke is “off-galaxy” (Figure 9, bottom-right panel). In view of the paucity of photometric data for the other four supernovae, we do not discuss them further.

7. ANALYSIS

7.1. The Sample

To summarize, the five distinguishing characteristics of our peculiar new class of transients are (i) peak luminosity intermediate between that of novae and most supernovae, (ii) faster photometric evolution (rise and decline) than that of normal supernovae, (iii) photospheric velocities comparable to those of normal supernovae, (iv) early evolution to the nebular phase, and (v) nebular spectra dominated by Calcium emission.

Based on available observations, the objects that satisfy the defining characteristics of this class of “Calcium-rich gap” transients are SN 2005E, SN 2007ke, PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv, and PTF 11bij. Their light curves are shown in Figure 8 and nebular spectra in Figure 4. Observed properties of these events are summarized in Table 3.

Our choice of these five characteristics is motivated by choosing the maximum set of characteristics that gives

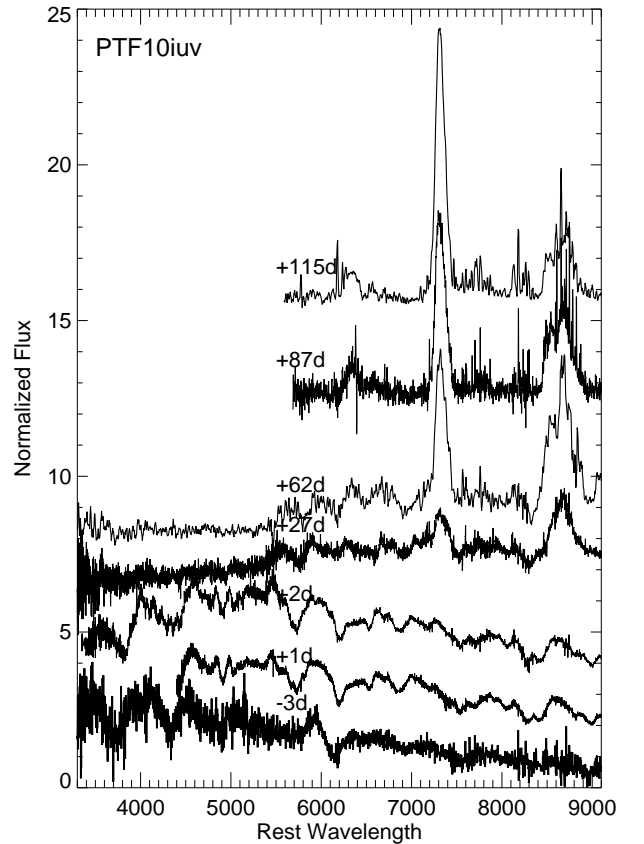


FIG. 6.— Spectral evolution of PTF 10iuv.

the largest number of related transients. Evidently, if we add characteristics to this list, the family size becomes smaller and we may overlook a unifying explanation. If we remove characteristics from this list, the family becomes larger but we may inadvertently introduce a diversity of progenitor channels. We discuss examples of each case below.

If we require an additional sixth property of a photospheric spectrum with prominent Helium lines, only PTF 10iuv and SN 2005E would be members of the family. It is not clear whether the photospheric spec-

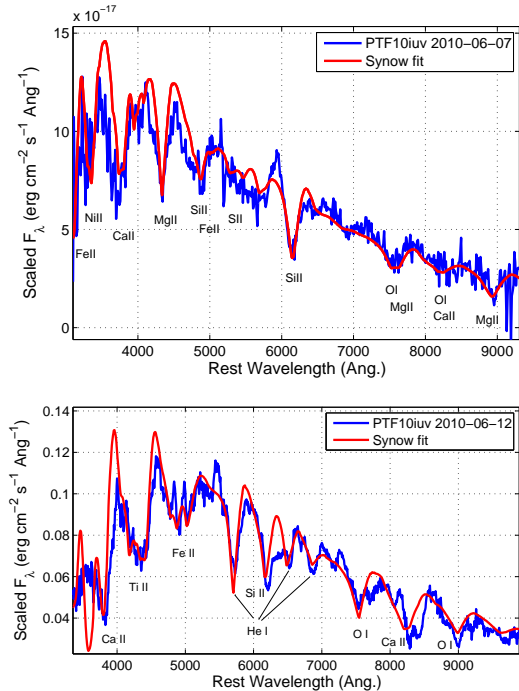


FIG. 7.— SYNOW fits to photospheric spectra of PTF 10iuv. *Top*: SYNOW fit of a pre-maximum spectrum ($T \approx 8500$ K, $v \approx 10,000$ km s $^{-1}$) with prominent Magnesium, Silicon and Oxygen lines. *Bottom*: SYNOW fit of post-maximum photospheric spectrum of PTF 10iuv ($T \approx 6500$ K, $v \approx 9000$ km s $^{-1}$). The most prominent features are Helium, Oxygen, Calcium and Titanium.

tra of PTF 09dav exhibit Helium (see discussion in Sullivan et al. 2011). The earliest spectra of SN 2007ke and PTF 11bij are not until +19 d and +21 d after maximum light. These two spectra already show the nebular features of prominent [Ca II] emission common to the class, but we cannot confirm Helium. Therefore, we allow a photospheric diversity but require a nebular uniformity in the class.

If in addition to Calcium, we also require Oxygen emission in the nebular spectrum, only PTF 10iuv, SN 2005E, and PTF 11bij would be members of this class. PTF 09dav does not show Oxygen emission and SN 2007ke does not have spectra at a sufficiently late epoch to test this.

On the other hand, if we require the absence of Hydrogen emission from this class, we would exclude PTF 09dav. It is the only member of this class that showed Hydrogen, albeit only at late times.

It is pertinent here to discuss the case of SN 2008ha (Valenti et al. 2009; Foley et al. 2009b,a), a peculiar transient found in the disk of an irregular galaxy. This transient satisfies four out of the five properties of this class. The only difference is that it showed extremely low photospheric velocities of ≈ 2000 km s $^{-1}$. The photospheric spectra of SN 2008ha have been compared to those of the SN 2002cx family of supernovae, and it has been suggested that SN 2008ha is a lower velocity and lower luminosity analog of this family. The SN 2002cx family has starkly different late-time spectra dominated by permitted iron lines (it has been argued that these spectra are not nebular even at +400 d, e.g., Jha et al.

2006; Sahu et al. 2008) and no evidence of Calcium-richness. Therefore, the 2002cx-family is likely unrelated to the class of transients discussed here.

The membership of SN 2008ha in either the SN 2002cx family or in the “Calcium-rich gap” class of transients is unclear. On grounds that the extremely low velocities may be diagnostic of a different explosion mechanism, we tentatively exclude SN 2008ha as a member of the class of “Calcium-rich gap” transients.

Originally, Filippenko et al. (2003) suggested that there was a class defined by only one property: prominence of Calcium relative to supernovae of Type Ib. This property alone would suggest that SN 2000ds, SN 2003dg, SN 2003dr and SN 2003H are also members of this class. As discussed in §6, these events were not monitored photometrically. Additionally, SN 2005cz (Kawabata et al. 2010; Perets et al. 2011), which also has a similar nebular spectrum but an extremely sparse light curve, would become a member of this class. Without a light curve, the ejecta mass in this classification would remain ambiguous. As discussed below, low ejecta mass is a crucial clue to distinguish this class from variants of normal SN CC as well as SN Ia. We note here that even if light curves were available and consistent with the properties of this class, it would not alleviate the challenge posed to many progenitor scenarios by the strong preference for remote locations. Specifically, SN 2005cz is in an old environment (Perets et al. 2011), SN 2003H is amidst interacting galaxies, SN 2000ds is in an elliptical galaxy, and SN 2003dr is offset from an edge-on galaxy.

7.2. Comparison to Type Ia and Type Ib Supernovae

In Sullivan et al. (2011), we discussed that although the photospheric spectra of PTF 09dav share some similarities to those of SN Ia, there are several differences as follows. (i) PTF 09dav does not obey the Phillips relation (Phillips 1993). There is a break in the slope of the relation for subluminal SN Ia, but this is obeyed by all SN 1991bg-like supernovae including the faintest member, SN 2007ax (Kasliwal et al. 2008). (ii) The photospheric spectra of PTF 09dav show Scandium and Strontium (elements usually seen only in spectra of SN CC). (iii) The nebular spectrum of PTF 09dav does not show any Fe-peak elements, which is inconsistent with nebular spectra of all SN Ia (Figure 4).

The photospheric spectra of PTF 10iuv around maximum light resemble those of SN Ib. However, a distinguishing characteristic is that a month after maximum, Calcium emission starts to become prominent. We checked spectra of 26 SN Ib from PTF for Calcium-richness. In Figure 6, we show seven spectra of SN Ib. While the Calcium near-IR triplet becomes prominent in all of the SN Ib as they evolve, the [Ca II] doublet is especially prominent in PTF 10iuv. PTF 10vnv and PTF 10inj also show [Ca II], but the relative flux ratio of [Ca II] to O I is much lower than that seen in PTF 10iuv. The case of PTF 10hcw is less clear, as [Ca II] is more prominent than O I but the supernova set soon after discovery and the photometric coverage stops before it reached maximum. In the nebular phase, the flux ratio of [Ca II] to [O I] is also much lower in SN Ib relative to PTF 10iuv (Figure 4). Furthermore, the light curves of SN Ib are typically more luminous by about 2 mag and evolve more slowly by at least a factor of 2.

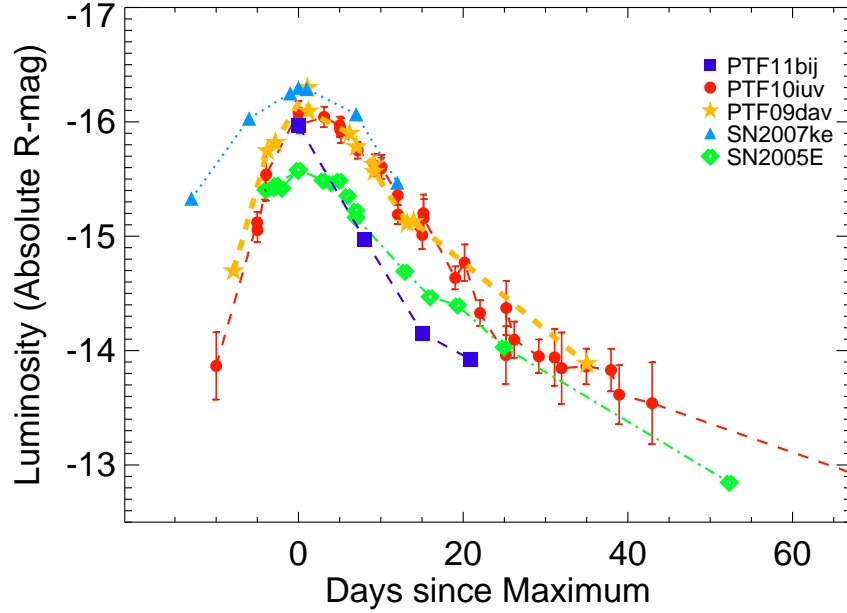


FIG. 8.— Light curves of all five members of the class of Calcium-rich gap transients. Note the lower peak luminosities and faster evolution relative to normal supernovae.

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF PROPERTIES OF “CA-RICH GAP” TRANSIENTS

	SN 2005E	SN 2007ke	PTF 09dav	PTF 10iuv	PTF 11bij
Peak absolute mag. (M_r)	-15.5	-16.3	-16.4	-16	-15.9
Rise-time (days)	>9	15	12	12	...
Decay time (days)	14	15	12	12	10
Photospheric velocity (km s^{-1})	11,000	11,000	6000	10,000	...
Helium in photospheric spectra?	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	...
Calcium in nebular spectra?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hydrogen in nebular spectra?	No	No	Yes	No	No
Limiting magnitude of host galaxy	-7.5	...	-9.8	-12.1	-12.4
Offset from nearest host galaxy (kpc)	23	8.5	40	37	33
Galaxy group environment?	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

7.3. Modeling the Light Curve: Ejecta Mass and Radioactivity

The light curve of PTF10iuv is very well-sampled. The rising portion of the light curve can constrain the ejecta mass and the late-time decay can constrain the radioactive mass. Therefore, we can test the hypothesis of whether this explosion is radioactively powered by ^{56}Ni as in SNIa.

For supernovae with photospheric velocity, v , and rise-time, t_r , the ejecta mass is $M_{\text{ej}} \propto v t_r^2$ (Arnett 1982). Therefore, assuming the same opacity, we can derive an ejecta mass by scaling relative to a normal SNIa with parameters $1.4 M_{\odot}$, $11,000 \text{ km s}^{-1}$, and 17.4 days. PTF10iuv has a rise-time of 12 days and an average photospheric velocity of 7600 km s^{-1} ; hence, it has an ejecta mass of $0.46 M_{\odot}$. PTF09dav has the same rise-time but a lower velocity of 6000 km s^{-1} , giving an ejecta mass of $0.36 M_{\odot}$ (Sullivan et al. 2011). There are no data to constrain the rise-time of SN2005E. Assuming it was also 12 days and using its photospheric velocity of $11,000 \text{ km s}^{-1}$, we get an ejecta mass of $0.67 M_{\odot}$. Note

that this is a factor of two higher than the total ejecta mass estimated by Perets et al. (2010) based on the nebular spectrum. This may not be surprising given that the nebular spectrum analysis may not have accounted for all of the Helium. Moreover, higher ejecta mass for SN2005E was expected based on light-curve modeling as well (Waldman et al. 2010).

For PTF10iuv, given the peak luminosity of $4.6 \times 10^{41} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$ and a 12 day rise, we can derive a ^{56}Ni mass of $0.016 M_{\odot}$. However, we find that the late-time photometry is brighter than what is expected from radioactive decay of ^{56}Ni (Figure 12). A possible caveat here is that there is some light from an underlying dwarf host galaxy. The last photometric point is fainter than the depth of our pre-explosion co-add. It is possible that there is some contamination in the light curve due to the flux of such a host. Therefore, we plot the dotted line in Figure 12 which subtracts the last two data points from the rest of the light curve. We are continuing to obtain even later time imaging to further test this caveat.

Should further observations rule out host contamina-

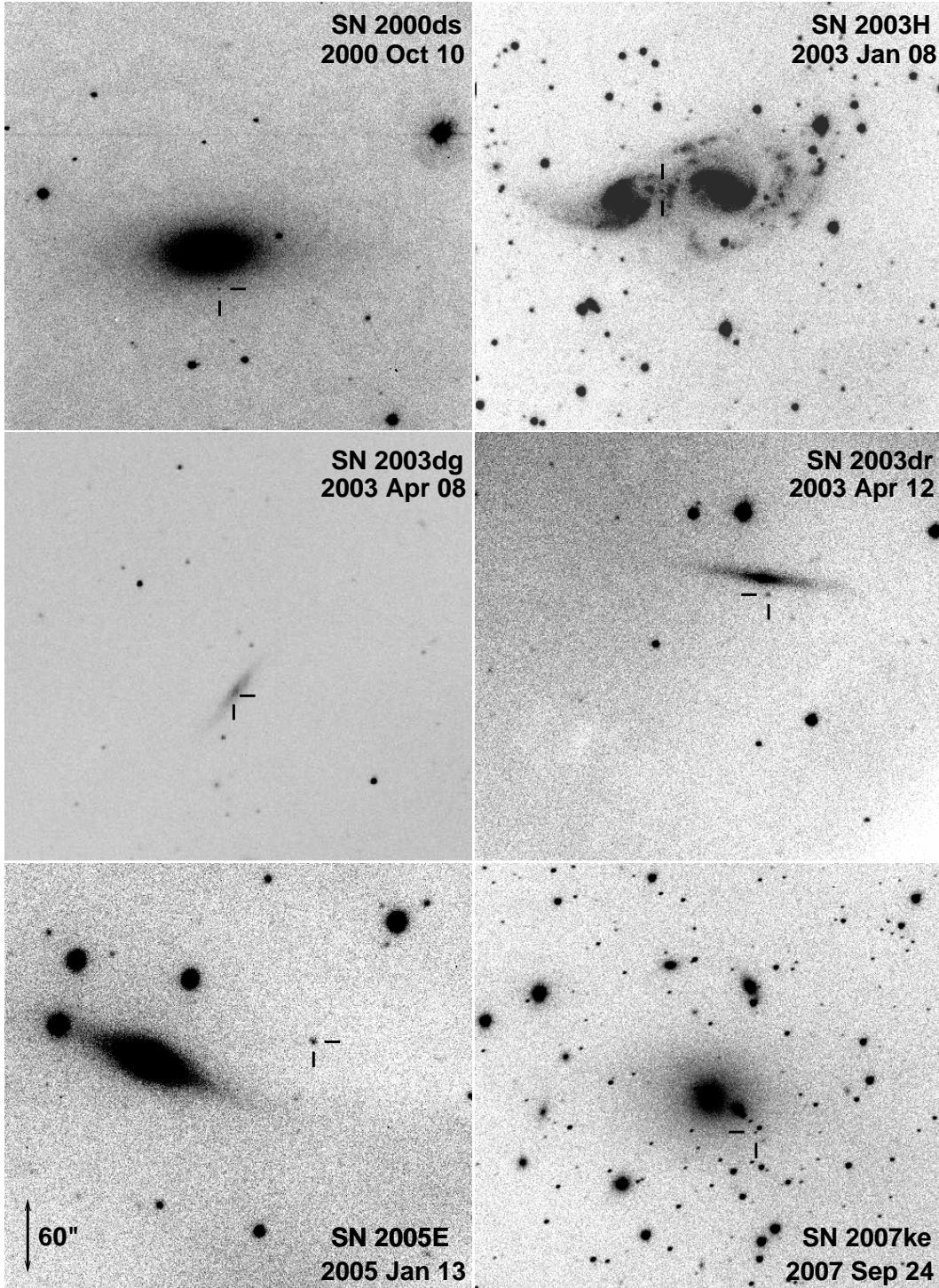


FIG. 9.— Locations of Calcium-rich supernovae from the KAIT Lick Observatory Supernova Search sample. From *Top Left* to *Bottom Right*: SN 2000ds, SN 2003H, SN 2003dg, SN 2003dr, SN 2005E, and SN 2007ke. Unfortunately, adequate photometric data are available only for SN 2005E and SN 2007ke to confirm their similarity to PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv, and PTF 11bij. Note that the locations are atypical: elliptical host, interacting galaxy pair environment, off the disk of an edge-on galaxy, large projected offset from isolated host, and galaxy group environment.

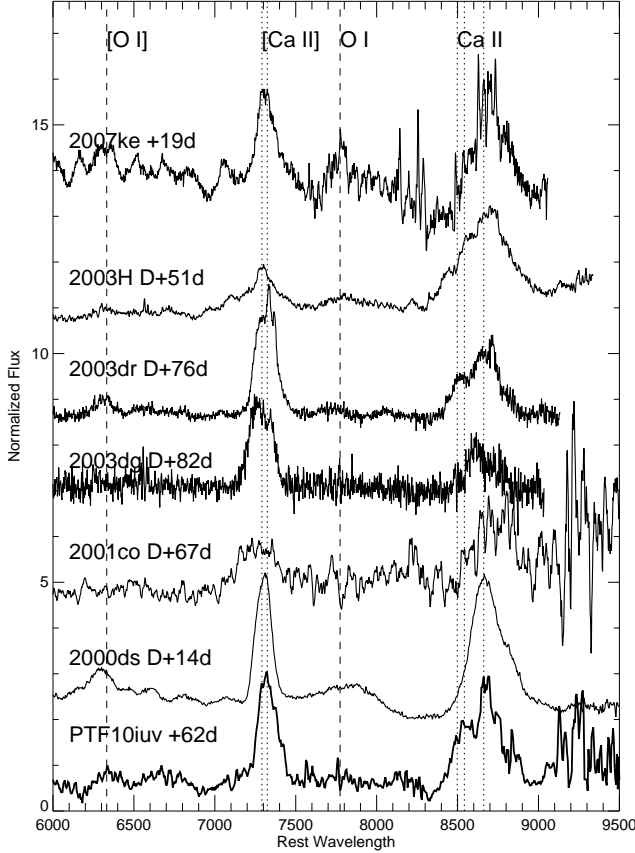


FIG. 10.— Spectra of the KAIT/LOSS sample of Calcium-rich supernovae compared to PTF 10iuv. Except for SN 2007ke, as the photometry is not available to constrain the maximum-light epoch, the phase is relative to discovery and not maximum.

tion, this may suggest either a radioactive species other than ^{56}Ni or an additional source powering the light curve. For example, a larger contribution by ^{44}Ti , which has a long half-life of 60 yr, may seem a promising candidate to explain the late-time slow evolution. However, if all of the high luminosity at late times were attributed to this element, it would require too large a quantity of ^{44}Ti ($\sim 2 M_{\odot}$). Modeling of different combinations of other additional radioactive species (^{44}Cr , ^{44}Ti , and ^{52}Fe) in the context of Helium-shell detonations on small (Waldman et al. 2010) and large CO white dwarf cores (Shen et al. 2010) has been undertaken. These efforts were limited by the missing light-curve data in the rising and very late phase of SN 2005E. The well-sampled light curve of PTF 10iuv should be able to better constrain these models.

7.4. Constraint on Electron Density

Using the flux ratio between [Ca II] and the Ca II near-IR triplet, we can constrain the density given a temperature. For PTF 10iuv, the nebular spectrum at +87 day gives a ratio of 0.86 and the spectrum at +115 day gives a ratio of 1.8. For PTF 09dav, the nebular spectrum at +94 day gives a ratio of >2.2 (assumed width of 300 \AA , 3σ limit is $3 \times 10^{-18} \text{ erg cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} \text{ \AA}^{-1}$). For SN 2005E, the ratio at +65 d is 0.55 (Perets et al. 2010). SYNOW fits to late-time spectra suggest a temperature

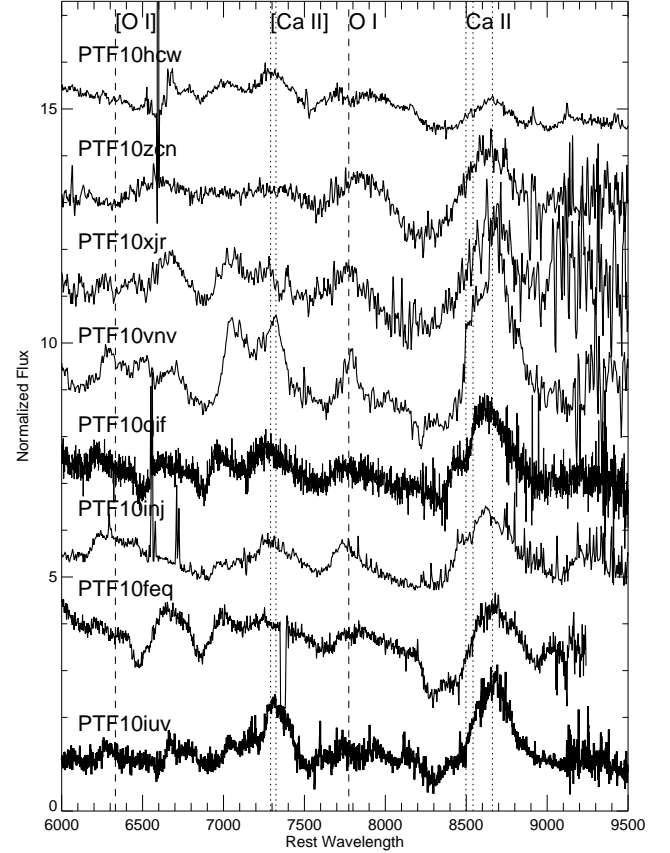


FIG. 11.— Comparison of PTF 10iuv to other SNIb about a month after maximum light. Note the strength of the [Ca II] line relative to O I.

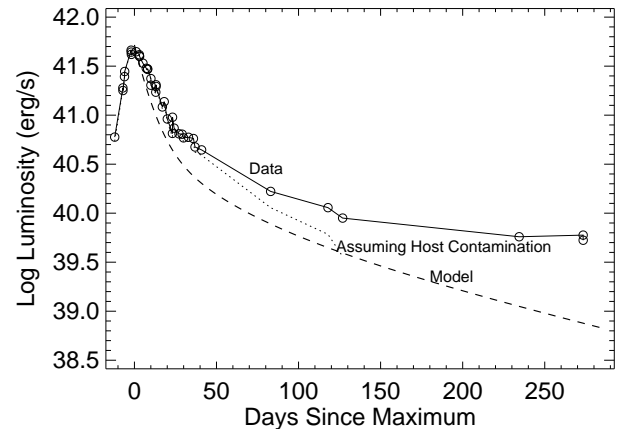


FIG. 12.— Modeling the light curve (circles; νF_{ν} in the r band) of PTF 10iuv with radioactive ^{56}Ni decay. The dotted line assumes that the last two data points are due to host-galaxy light contamination and subtracts $r = 23.8$ mag from the rest of the light curve. The model (dashed line) is based on an ejecta mass of $0.46 M_{\odot}$ and a ^{56}Ni mass of $0.016 M_{\odot}$.

roughly in the range 4500–5000 K. Following Figure 2 of Ferland & Persson (1989), assuming a temperature around 4500 K, the electron density is on the order of 10^9 cm^{-3} and decreases by a factor of a few in a couple of months.

7.5. Modeling the Nebular Spectra

Next, we estimate the mass of the dominant species in the ejecta using the nebular spectrum.

We estimate the Oxygen mass based on the luminosity of the [O I] line in the nebular phase. We can assume the high-density limit holds ($> 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-3}$) and estimate the oxygen mass as

$$M_{\text{O}} = 10^8 f_{[\text{O I}]} D_{\text{Mpc}}^2 e^{(2.28/T_4)} M_{\odot},$$

following Uomoto (1986). Assuming a temperature of 4500 K, we get $0.025 M_{\odot}$ of Oxygen for PTF 10iuv and $0.037 M_{\odot}$ for SN 2005E. Note that the oxygen mass is consistent with the mass derived by Perets et al. (2010). A cautionary note here is that this calculation is extremely sensitive to temperature; a difference of only 500 K in temperature changes this estimate by a factor of 2.

Two months after maximum brightness, the luminosity in [Ca II] nebular emission for SN 2005E was $2 \times 10^{39} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$ and the derived ejecta mass was $0.135 M_{\odot}$ (Perets et al. 2010). The [Ca II] nebular luminosity is a factor of 2.5 smaller for PTF 10iuv and factor of 2.6 larger for PTF 09dav relative to SN 2005E. Under similar conditions, this may be representative of the range in Calcium mass for these events.

8. DISCUSSION

We are struck by the remote “off-galaxy” locations of all five confirmed members of the class of “Calcium-rich gap” transients (Figure 3) and Figure 9). While five may still be considered small-number statistics, location can be a powerful diagnostic of the physical origin. Below, we discuss the pros and cons of two broad classes of possible progenitor scenarios: a white dwarf and a massive star.

8.1. A White Dwarf?

The white dwarf scenario has tremendous appeal to explain “Calcium-rich gap” transients for two reasons. First, the remote galactic locations, intracluster environments, and constraints on star formation of the observed members of this family point to an old population. Second, the low ejecta masses derived from the light curves and nebular spectra are in the range of what is derived from white dwarf explosions and not massive star explosions.

The family of transients presented here is not the standard thermonuclear explosion of a white dwarf as seen in SN Ia. There are two major differences. First, none of these transients obey the Phillips (1993) relation. The inferred ejected masses are smaller than in SN Ia. Second, Fe-group elements seen in all SN Ia are absent in the nebular spectra of these explosions.

Next, we discuss several alternate explosions of white dwarfs that have been discussed in the literature to explain intermediate luminosity and fast evolving transients. First, we consider a “.Ia” explosion following the

final Helium flash in an ultracompact white-dwarf white-dwarf binary (Bildsten et al. 2007; Shen et al. 2010). The observed rise-time of “Calcium-rich gap” transients is too slow for a “.Ia” explosion. The observed ejecta masses are too large for a shell detonation (Waldman et al. 2010) and suggest that the core also participated in the explosion.

Woosley & Kasen (2011) derive several models for explosions of sub-Chandrasekhar white dwarfs. However, the peak absolute magnitude and rise-time range observed for “Calcium-rich gap” transients is not predicted by any of these models.

Another proposed theoretical model is accretion induced collapse (AIC) of a rapidly rotating white dwarf into a neutron star (Metzger et al. 2009). However, AIC predicts a spectrum dominated by intermediate-mass elements, much higher velocities ($0.1 c$), and much more rapid rise (1 day) and decline (4–5 days) than what is observed for Ca-rich gap transients.

Another possibility is deflagration of a sub-Chandrasekhar mass white dwarf (Woosley & Weaver 1994), as it is also expected to have lower luminosity than a SN Ia. However, the late-time light curve and absence of Fe-peak elements in the nebular spectra are inconsistent with this model.

The presence of Helium in SN 2005E and PTF 10iuv can be explained for some white dwarf models. But, the presence of hydrogen in PTF 09dav poses a major challenge to all white dwarf explosions. One possible scenario to explain late-time hydrogen in a white-dwarf explosion is as follows: Consider a binary where mass-transfer is from a hydrogen rich companion star onto a white dwarf. This accretion initially proceeded at a low rate, resulting in a series of nova eruptions prior to the sub-Chandrasekhar explosion or Helium-shell detonation. The photons from the final explosion would eventually reach one of the previously ejected nova shells and the interaction would give $\text{H}\alpha$ emission.

Quantitatively, if the shell was photo-ionized, the distance to this nova shell would be the speed of light multiplied by 95 days, or $2.5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}$. Given the velocity of 1000 km s^{-1} to traverse this distance, the nova eruption would then have occurred 78 yr prior to the supernova. Given the absence of Hydrogen in early-time spectra, we consider instead collisional ionization when the shock front itself reaches the shell. The distance to the shell would then be $8.2 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}$ and the nova shell would have to be ejected ~ 950 days before the supernova. The mass of Hydrogen needed to sustain the observed luminosity for an hour is $\frac{4}{n} \times 10^{-4} M_{\odot}$, where n is the number of times the same Hydrogen atom gets excited in one hour.

Yet another scenario was recently proposed by Metzger (2011) that can potentially explain a trace amount of Hydrogen – tidal disruption of a white dwarf by a neutron star or stellar mass black hole. However, several other observables (e.g., velocities) are inconsistent with this model.

While the presence of five transients in remote locations is a strong clue in favor of the white dwarf scenario, the absence of any events in disks of galaxies is quite problematic. Studies of white dwarf binaries have shown that the number of white dwarfs in halos relative to that in the disk is nearly a third, larger than expected

from the ratio of the overall mass or light (Ruiter et al. 2007). However, that is not sufficient to explain why there is a strong preference for remote locations.

If the progenitor is indeed a white dwarf, then there must be a characteristic of white dwarfs which can be attributed to location and affects the explosion signature. For example, the age of the white dwarf (e.g., if the time scale for evolution in a multiple star system were longer), the composition of the white dwarf (e.g., if Helium white dwarfs were preferentially found in remote locations), environmental characteristics (e.g., if metallicity/density affected the explosion or progenitor evolution time scale). One scenario that remains to be tested with detailed modeling is that at lower metallicity, even relatively lower mass stars can evolve to become white dwarfs in a Hubble time. Perhaps, explosions of these relatively lower mass white dwarfs are subluminal, fast evolving, and Calcium-rich.

8.2. A Massive Star?

Given that none of the above white dwarf models easily explain all of the observed clues of “Calcium-rich gap” transients, we briefly consider the massive star option. There are some explosion properties which are reminiscent of core-collapse supernovae: similarity of nebular spectra albeit with enhanced Calcium, similarity of photospheric spectra to SN Ib in the case of PTF 10iuv and SN 2005E, and the presence of Hydrogen in the case of PTF 09dav.

8.2.1. Massive Star in the Outskirts?

Perets et al. (2010) convincingly argue against the progenitors being hypervelocity massive stars formed in the disk. A more feasible option that allows massive stars to traverse large distances is tidal stripping during galaxy interactions. This is especially intriguing given the galaxy group surrounding the locations of PTF 10iuv, PTF 11bij and SN 2007ke.

Studies of intracluster environments show evidence for a dominant old component as well as a young component, particularly in tidal tails of interacting gas-rich galaxies (Mullan et al. 2011; Williams et al. 2007). It has been shown that roughly 15% of the cluster’s mass is in the intracluster medium. Sivanandam et al. (2009) show that 50% of metals come from intracluster supernovae. Mullan et al. (2011) present a study of tidal tails of interacting galaxies and find that young star clusters formed *in situ* in half the sample. Another possibility is that there is some low-level star formation in remote locations. Recent systematic surveys (Werk et al. 2010, 2008) show star formation in the far outskirts of noninteracting galaxies. About 10% of the galaxies in this study had outlying H II regions with offsets between 20 kpc and 40 kpc.

Our deep ground-based limits show neither any evidence of tidal tails nor H II regions. However, given the distance to these supernovae, they are not sensitive to a significant fraction of the luminosity function of H II regions and young star clusters. So, we cannot completely rule out the possibility of a massive star origin. Deep narrow-band imaging will provide better constraints.

8.2.2. Fallback Supernova?

Assuming there was a small amount of *in situ* star formation below our detection limits, one would expect regular core-collapse supernovae in the outskirts as well. However, the absence of regular SN CC with offsets larger than 30 kpc in the PTF sample appears to be at odds with the progenitors being massive stars (see Figure 1).

A possible partial resolution is if the fate of massive stars in very low-metallicity environments is very different. Specifically, the lower metallicity in the outskirts lowers the mass-loss rate, and it has been suggested that a larger fraction of massive stars collapse directly to a black hole (e.g., Heger et al. 2003, O’Connor & Ott 2011). Such a collapse results in a subluminal explosion or no explosion at all. This could explain both the small numbers of SN CC in the outskirts and the dearth of regular SN Ib/c in low-metallicity environments. This is also consistent with studies that show that regular SN Ib/c are more centrally concentrated relative to SN II (Anderson & James 2009). Some of the missing Type Ib/c explosions in low-metallicity environments (outer parts of galaxies) could perhaps be subluminal and short-lived fallback events. Fallback of some ejecta onto the proto-neutron star to form the black hole could explain the low ejecta mass, fast evolution, and absence of heavy elements observed in this class. It would not be surprising, then, that the first fallback events observed are located in the outskirts of their hosts.

There are three important caveats to this scenario. First, since the initial mass function is quite universal and varies little over a wide range of metallicity (e.g., Myers et al. 2011), we expect to see a significant population of normal SN II-P from the lower mass range of SN CC unaffected by metallicity. But, current transient surveys have not found any SN II-P in such remote galactic outskirts. Second, PTF 10iuv and SN 2005E were Hydrogen-free. Therefore, mass loss would have to be finely tuned to be high enough to expel the Hydrogen, low enough such that there is fallback onto the core, yet not too low such that there is no explosion at all. Kawabata et al. (2010) proposed an alternate scenario where the Hydrogen was removed by close binary interaction. Third, some galaxies have shown that the metallicity gradient flattens beyond a certain radius and doesn’t continue to decrease. For example, metallicity measurements of the H II regions in the outskirts show that they are not exceptionally low metallicity (roughly 0.4 solar; Werk et al. 2011). To the extent that metallicity is diagnostic of line-driven mass loss, this presents another challenge to the massive star scenario.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Five transients (SN 2005E, SN 2007ke, PTF 09dav, PTF 10iuv and PTF 11bij) share the following common properties: low peak luminosity, fast photometric evolution, large photospheric velocities, early evolution to the nebular phase, and Calcium-dominated ejecta. Furthermore, all five members of this class of “Calcium-rich gap” transients are located in the outskirts of their putative host galaxies. This set of properties, in conjunction with peculiarities specific to each of them (e.g., the presence of Hydrogen, Scandium, and Strontium in PTF 09dav, strong constraints against star formation in SN 2005E, intracluster environment of PTF 10iuv, PTF 11bij, and SN 2007ke), warrants a creative modification of standard

thermonuclear or standard core-collapse scenarios.

We can estimate a lower limit on the rate of this class of “Calcium-rich gap” events by comparing to the rate of SNIa discovered by PTF in the same volume in the same time. Within 200 Mpc, we found 128 SNIa and 3 such events. Therefore, a lower limit on the rate is $> 7 \times 10^{-7} \text{ Mpc}^{-3} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ (we used the SNIa rate from Li et al. 2011). We emphasize that this is a lower limit, as a few days of bad weather would be much more detrimental for finding these short-lived and lower luminosity transients compared to SNIa. This rate of $> 2.3\%$ relative to SNIa is consistent with the relative rate of $7 \pm 5\%$ estimated by Perets et al. (2010).

The key to solving the mystery of the origin of “Calcium-rich gap” transients is their location. The remote locations can either be a red herring (due to small numbers) or the most important clue. Parenthetically, we remark that the two Type Ia supernovae (SN 2006bt – Foley et al. 2010; PTF 10ops – Maguire et al. 2011) found farthest outside the main body of their host galaxies are also peculiar. Extremely deep late-time observations (e.g., with the *Hubble Space Telescope*) are needed to serve as a litmus test: detection of a dwarf satellite, super star cluster, or globular cluster would provide a direct clue about the environment, and nondetection would require a phoenix transient that rose from the ashes.

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